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Volume 2 | Issue 3

Article 7

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August 2015

## CARD Sets Fall Policy Conference Dates

Center for Agricultural and Rural Development

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### Recommended Citation

Center for Agricultural and Rural Development (2015) "CARD Sets Fall Policy Conference Dates," *Iowa Ag Review*: Vol. 2 : Iss. 3 , Article 7.

Available at: <http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/iowaagreview/vol2/iss3/7>

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### Conclusions

Numerous CRP decisions will be made by farmers and policy makers over the next several years. There have been many benefits to the CRP; the most obvious has been reduced soil erosion with consequent water quality effects, but there have also been other benefits, including an increase in wildlife populations. What the future holds for CRP land and the benefits from the program are an unknown at this time. Unfortunately, from a conservation perspective the program is ending with historically high grain prices and at the low point in the cattle cycle.

Strict monetary returns would seem to indicate that the majority of the land would be returned to production. However, analysis of last year's early out decisions indicates that there is a degree of reluctance to terminate CRP contracts (almost 80 percent of the contracts terminated were scheduled to end within two years), and not all of the land is returned to crop production

(52 percent in corn and soybeans, 44 percent haying and grazing). As noted earlier, these contracts were terminated in May of 1995 when market returns were lower and before flexibility contracts. Thus, the economic incentives for early termination of CRP contracts, and to return that area to row crop production are much higher now. This implies that corresponding percentages likely represent lower bounds.

Again from a conservation perspective, much of the land that was returned to production was not soil tested and an insecticide was used. Insurance type treatments (broadbased herbicide and insecticide applications) have been shown to lead to overuse of inputs and decreased profits. Hopefully, as the CRP evolves, farmers will be better positioned to take advantage of market opportunities and follow sound production practices as well.

### CARD Sets Fall Policy Conference Dates

CARD's 1996 Fall Policy Conference will be presented on two different days at opposite ends of the state. On September 12, 1996, Iowa Lakes Community College in Emmetsburg will host the program. On the following day, September 13, 1996, the program will move to Indian Hills Community College in Ottumwa.

"Market - Based Agriculture: Opportunities and Challenges" will feature several speakers from the CARD/FAPRI staff, including FAPRI co-director, William H. Meyers discussing the long- and short-term outlook for U.S. and international agriculture. CARD Director Stanley Johnson and research division head Bruce Babcock are also slated to participate in the program.

Sessions will run from 9:00 am to 4:15 pm. Sponsors of the conference are CARD, ISU Extension, and the two community colleges hosting the events.

The registration fee for the conference at either location is \$35 before September 6, 1996, and \$40 after September 6, 1996. Registration brochures with additional information on the program and how to sign up to attend are available from your local county Extension office or from Judith Pim at 515/294-6257.

